

LOVING THE LAW OF THE LORD

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“O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.”
Psalm 119:97-100

DAVID had a very small Bible, but he thought it a very precious one. Our Bible is quite a large library compared with the one that David had, yet he read and re-read it, and exulted greatly in the treasure which he found in it. I have sometimes heard people say that they wished they had fuller records of the life of Christ, and when they find John writing that he supposed that even the world itself could not have contained all the books which might have been written about the Savior, they ask, “Why have we not more of the interesting incidents of His career preserved?”

Some of these very people do not read what is preserved, and they seem to forget that the Bible is exactly the right size, most portable and most useful, and that if we had a larger one, some people might then have said, “It is too large a Book for us ever to read it through, and to have it at our fingers’ ends.” Let us be thankful that the Bible is so large that there is abundance of fresh reading for every day of the year, and let us prize it as David prized his much smaller portion.

David was one of those who helped to enlarge the Bible. The Spirit of God rested upon him in so large a degree that he has given us, in the Book of Psalms, a most precious part of Sacred Writ. Yet he did not despise the rest of the written Word that he possessed, and it is notable that those saints who had most of the Spirit of God were always those who most highly valued the Scriptures.

When Peter, filled with the Spirit, stood up with the eleven, on the day of Pentecost, his sermon consisted mainly of quotations from the Old Testament. The Holy Ghost even quotes from writings which He inspired in order to show the value which all of us should attach to the written Word.

Certain persons have said that they did not need what was written, for they had the Spirit within them to teach them all they needed to know, but such talk as that is not according to the Spirit of Christ. Neither is it according to the mind of the inspired psalmist, for although God spoke by him, yet he greatly valued that which God had spoken by others, and he searched the Scriptures which he possessed with much avidity and intense delight.

Beloved, if the man who was inspired by the Spirit of God thought so much of the Word of the Lord, how highly ought we to value it, we who will never be inspired writers, and who cannot stand on the same platform with David in that respect! Our conscience ought to commend to us the infallible truth which God has presented for our use in the Sacred Scriptures.

Being desirous to press upon you, beloved, a sense of the value of Holy Scripture, I want you to learn from our text, first, *David’s love to the Word*, secondly, *how he showed it*, and thirdly, *what benefit came to him from it*.

I. First, then, let us consider DAVID’S LOVE FOR THE WORD.

He has tried to express the inexpressible by saying, “O how love I thy law!” He cannot tell the Lord how much he loves it. He had good reason for loving God’s law, his love was a reasonable one. Love is sometimes blind, but in this case, David loved with his eyes open, and loved with good reason. We ought to love all that God gives to us, and especially all His blessed teaching. If you do not love the

Bible, you certainly do not love the God who gave it to us, but if you do love God, I am certain that no other book in all the world will be comparable, in your mind, to God's own Book. Where God's handwriting is most plainly to be seen, there God's servants will at once turn their eyes. When God speaks, it is the delight of our ears to hear what He says.

Further, David loved the law of the Lord, *because being God's Word, it was solid truth*. In other books, there is some truth and some error. Apart from the Bible, the best book that was ever written in this world has mistakes in it. It is not possible for fallible men to write infallible books. Somehow or other, we either say more than is true or less than is true, the most skillful writer does not always keep along that hairline of truth, which is more difficult to tread than a razor's edge. But Scripture never errs.

Here is the gold bullion without a single particle of alloy. Here is the living water leaping from the rock, and there is no defilement in it. David truly wrote, "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Such is the truth as we find it in Scripture. Now, a man of truth naturally loves the Book of Truth, and finding it to be so pure he cries, "O how love I thy law!"

In addition to this being God's Book, and being therefore pure, David no doubt loved it *because of the majestic goodness, the sublime grace of its revelation*. What has the Bible taught us? Some terrible things, certainly, for it has revealed the wrath to come. But glorious things too, for it has revealed the great Substitute who took our sins upon Himself, and put that wrath away for all who trust Him. How wondrous is the revelation of God in Christ Jesus! Well might the prophets long for it, and kings desire to see it. You have it in this blessed Book of God.

You have far more of the revelation than David had, for though he could see Christ in the types of the Old Testament, you can see Him much more clearly in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. How much, then, you ought to love that Word which so plainly shows you the way of salvation through the atoning sacrifice of God's only begotten and well-beloved Son! Clasp the Bible to your bosom, repentant, pardoned sinner, and say to the Lord, "O how I love Thy law, for through this Word my chains have been broken, and I have been set free forever!"

David also had good cause to love that law of the Lord, *because it had been his comfort so often in the time of his sorrow*, and many of us can say the same. How often have I, in times of frightful depression of spirit, reached down my Bible, and within a few minutes have been able to leap for joy of soul, and sing in the conscious realization of the comforting presence of my God!

Get but the one text suitable to the occasion, applied to the heart with power by the Holy Spirit, and it will not matter where you are, you will be sure to be glad. You might lie in a dungeon, as Paul and Silas did, scarred with the scourge, but you would sing as they did, and make your fellow prisoners hear you. If you could but get the right text applied to your soul by the Holy Spirit, it would be precious to your soul in your times of deepest distress, and would be like a star lighting up your darkest night.

I might thus go on for a long while, showing you that David had good reason to love the law of the Lord, but you probably believe that as much as I do, so I will content myself by reminding you that *he loved it all*. He says, "O how love I thy law!" He means not only some of it, but all of it.

Dear friend, if there is any text of Scripture that has a quarrel with you, you had better submit to it at once, if you are not in full agreement with the Word of God, you are wrong, but it is not. There are some passages of Scripture which certain brethren do not care to read, as they do not suit the views that they hold.

There are some commentaries that seem to have been written on the principle of twisting the text into the shape that the commentator approved, and I am afraid we have all had a share in attempts to make the Word of God say what we think it ought to have said according to our system of divinity. That will not do, brethren, we must give up trying to mend the Scripture, and say to the Lord, "O how I love Thy law! I love it too well to wish to alter a single letter of it."

One brother does not like the doctrine of election, another likes the doctrine of divine sovereignty, but he does not like the doctrine of human responsibility, and he cannot endure exhortations to sinners to

repent and believe the Gospel. Well, brethren, it does not matter what you like, or what you do not like, if those doctrines are in the Word, you had better make up your mind to like them, for they will not be taken away to please you. You cannot bend the Bible to your mind, how much better it would be for you to bend your mind to the Bible, and to say, “O how I love Thy law—the doctrines of it, the precepts of it, the promises of it, the ordinances it enjoins upon me, the warnings it sets before me, the exhortations it gives me!” Love the whole Bible from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, and be prepared even to die rather than to give up half a verse of it.

Further, *David loved it always*. I find that we might read his declaration in the past tense, and yet give the sense of the original, “O how I have loved Thy law!” He is a saint who loves God’s Word always. We have heard of some who read their Bibles on Sunday, but put them away in a drawer with a sprig of lavender all the week. That was not David’s plan, he could say, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day,” And no doubt he meant every day of the week.

We must love God’s Word when we are at business, and act upon it there, and love it in our families, and act upon it there. To love the Bible in the study as a book to start into is a good thing, but it is not a good thing if it ends there, we must love the Word so as to live upon it wherever we may be. In any company, if it is right for you to be there, you will feel, “I am not afraid to take God’s Word with me here, for I am now doing what is in accordance with it.”

I have heard that “the Golden Rule” once went to a place where men were gathered together to make money—I think it was the Stock Exchange—and they called the beadle, and locked it up, for they said, “‘Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you,’ is a rule that will never do here,” but the Christian does not find it so, he can transact his business and keep his Bible near his heart all the time. When the Bible and the ledger fall out, it is a bad business. Oh, that we might love God’s Book all the day, and make it the guide of our ordinary business transactions.

David not only loved God’s law always, but *he was not ashamed to say that he loved it*, “O how love I thy law!” Young man, were you not afraid the other night, to confess that you were a Christian when your companions began chaffing you about your religion? I hear that they read a paper that was very critical and sarcastic, and that one of them turned round to you and said, “I think you are one of that sort,” and you blushed a good deal at the accusation.

Well, blush now to think that you blushed then, for there was nothing to blush about. Ashamed of being a Christian! Be ashamed of ever having been ashamed. David said, “O how love I thy law!” He cared not who heard him, and if our hearts are right with God, we shall not be ashamed to stand up, even if we are alone, and confess Christ.

Minorities have generally been in the right, and the multitude usually runs to do evil. *Vox populi* is not often *vox Dei*, it is more frequently the voice of the devil than the voice of God. That man is worthy of being called a man who dares to do right whatever others may do or say. “O how love I thy law!” said David, to let all men know that he was in love with the law of the Lord to the greatest conceivable extent.

II. But now, secondly, HOW DID HE SHOW HIS LOVE? He says, “It is my meditation all the day.”

Perhaps some thoughtless person says, “I suppose that David had nothing to do but sit down and read his Bible.” He had to be fighting Philistines, and ruling a kingdom, and with so much to do that his hands were kept fully occupied. Someone asks, “How, then, did he meditate all the day?” Well, those who are the most busy are often the very men who do the most meditation, for idleness and meditation are not generally very close companions. An idle man usually has idle thoughts, but the busy man, when he is able to think, thinks busy thoughts that are worth thinking. Now, if we love God’s Word as David did, we shall meditate upon it all the day as he did. How are we to do that?

It is an admirable plan to fix your thoughts upon some text of Scripture before you leave your bedroom in the morning, it will sweeten your meditation all the day. Always look God in the face before you see the face of anyone else. Lock up your heart in the morning, and hand the key to God, and keep

the world out of your heart. Take a text, and lay it on your tongue like a wafer made with honey, and let it melt in your mouth all day. If you do this, and meditate upon it, you will be surprised to notice how the various events of life will help to open up that text.

If that particular text does not seem suitable to some special occasion, steal away into a quiet place and get another one, only let your soul be so full of the Word of God that, at all the intervals and interstices when you can think upon it, the Word of God dwelling in you richly may come welling up into your mind, and make your meditation to be sweet and profitable.

I am afraid there are not many Christian who meditate upon the Word nowadays, meditation seems to have gone out of fashion, but if you do not meditate upon what you read, you might as well read some ordinary book for all the good your reading will do you. It is no use to hurry through your reading of the Scriptures, like a man riding through a field of ripe corn, it is no use trying to reap a good harvest in that fashion. To get the goodness out of the Scriptures, you must meditate upon them, and so digest them, just as you have seen the cattle lie down to chew the cud after eating.

To get the nourishment out of a text, turn it over and over in your mind, ruminate upon it, pull it to pieces word by word. It is a good thing sometimes not to be able to read fast, so that, like Mrs. Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom, one has to spell a text out letter by letter—L e t, let—n o t, not—y o u r, your—h e a r t, heart—let not your heart—b e, be—t r o u b l e d, troubled. That is the way to suck the sweetness out of the text. A text of Scripture is often like an apple tree with abundance of ripe fruit on it, and we are underneath the tree. Give it a shake, brethren, shake it till the ripe fruit drops down.

David proved his love to the law of the Lord by meditating upon it. Perhaps you think that would be very dull work, but I am sure it was not, nor will you think so if I tell you what it was upon which he meditated. The Word of God was a letter from his Father, and if ever your father has been away in a far country, you know how you have prized a letter from him. Good wife, if your husband has gone for a long sea voyage, and he has written home to you, how many times you have read his letter! Did I not see it, the other day, almost worn to pieces because you have carried it in your pocket ever since you received it? Nobody else knows how precious it is to you because nobody else is as nearly related to the writer as you are.

The Bible also contains the portrait of our truest and best Friend. I have seen you look at a photograph, the likeness of your dear mother who is in heaven, or of a dear child, or of someone still dearer, for you like to look at that face, and one reason why we love to read the Bible, and meditate upon it, is that it contains such a lifelike portrait of Christ. The Bible is also the charter of the Christian's liberty. He was a slave once, but he is free now through the blessed Emancipator who is revealed in this Book.

The Bible is the title-deed to our heavenly inheritance. The Bible is our patent of nobility, for here we read that we are made kings and priests unto God. The Bible is our chart, by which we steer safely across the watery wastes of life. The Bible is our cheque-book. We come to it, and take out the promises upon the Bank of Heaven, we fill them up, and present them before God in prayer, and we have what we will of Him when we ask in the name of Jesus. The Bible is to us the telescope through which we look forward to the celestial city where we are journeying.

I might keep on thus, by the hour together, singing the praises of this blessed Book, but I have, surely, given you reasons enough for our making it the theme of our meditation all the day. I wonder how many of us do this. If I were to say, "Hands up, everyone who has a Bible," everybody's hands here would go up. I suppose that nobody here is without a Bible, but if I were to ask, "How many here, constantly, as a habit and a delight, meditate upon the Scriptures?"—I wonder what answers I should receive? Well, I will not ask you that question, but let everybody ask it for himself, and judge himself concerning it in the sight of God.

III. Thirdly, we have to inquire, WHAT BENEFIT CAME TO DAVID THROUGH LOVING THE LAW OF THE LORD?

He was such a Bible reader, and Bible lover, that he gained some benefit from it, what was that benefit? He tells us that he grew wiser than three different sorts of people. First, he was made wiser than his enemies, secondly, he had more understanding than all his teachers, and thirdly, he understood more than the ancients. These are three of the blessings which meditation upon the Bible will give to us.

First, *we shall be wiser than our enemies*. God had taught David the meaning of the Scriptures, and by his daily meditation upon them, he had become wiser than his enemies. Some of you, young Christians, have to live from day to day amongst those who would like to pick holes in your coat if they could. They are watching you to try to bring an accusation against you, and they are very subtle and crafty, how shall you be able to guard yourselves against them?

This is the best way. Get the Bible wrought into your soul, and act according to its teachings, and then your enemies will not be able to bring a true accusation against you, or if they do, they will be like the men who watched Daniel, who could find nothing to bring against him except his religion. If you want to baffle all those who would bring a charge against you, do not trouble about them in the least. Care only to walk according to God's Word, for so you will defeat them.

In addition to trying to bring accusations against you, they will also seek to lay traps for you. Many a young man has had a hard time of it through the traps that have been laid for him, all sorts of schemes and plots have been devised to try to draw him aside from the right path, but the craftiest man in the world will not be able to overthrow the man who simply follows the directions given to him in the Word of God. Keep to that course and you must win in the long run. Although I do not like our common proverb, "Honesty is the best policy," yet there is a measure of truth in it—that even as a matter of policy, to do right is the best plan. I have often seen very cunning men quite puzzled by a simple-minded, straightforward, honest Christian.

David says that he was able to defeat all his enemies because God's Word was always with him, and he followed the directions that he found there, and dear friends, whether you are young or old, if you love the law of the Lord, put your trust in Jesus, and then obey the teachings of your Divine Master, you will certainly be able to defeat all the subtlety and all the malice of hell.

You may, like Joseph, be put in prison without being guilty of the crime laid to your charge, but it will be the straightest way to a throne. You may be persecuted for righteousness sake, but if it came to the very worst, and you were to be a martyr for the truth, that would be the straightest way to heaven. Therefore be just and fear not. Obey your God. Let the dogs of hell howl at you as they may, you shall be more than conqueror at the last.

Next, *David had more understanding than all his teachers*. He went into the schools as well as into the camp, and after his mental battles with the leaders there, he says, "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation." I do not think he means that he had more understanding than the wise, good, pious teachers, but that he had more understanding than those who vainly set up to be teachers.

There are still some of that kind left to plague us, the dry-as-dust teachers, who would fain teach us the letter of the Word, but ignore its true spirit. If there were any teachers in David's days, like the Jewish Rabbis who have left us the Talmud, the Mishna, and the Gemara, he might well say that he knew more than they did. They knew so much that they muddled everything. They went down so deep that they stirred up the mud at the bottom, and then neither themselves nor anybody else could see. David meditated upon the law of the Lord, and therefore, he knew a great deal more than those learned Rabbis knew.

But surely I may use the text with reference to skeptical learned men. Every now and then there is a great eruption, a volcano bursts up just under the foundations of the temple of the truth as if it were going to blow it all up, and the lava of skepticism begins running down our streets as if everything were about to be destroyed. At one time, it is a bishop who has been figuring on a slate, and found out that Genesis is wrong. At another time, we are told to give up some other portion of Scripture as being incorrect.

Well, what do we say to all this? Why, that we have more understanding than all these skeptical teachers if we meditate in God's statutes. We may not know how to answer all their questions, but we know how to ask them questions which they cannot answer. We may not be able to confute them in argument, but we shall still believe the law of the Lord.

Many a poor Christian has been baffled by some clever infidel, but he has said to himself, "If that gentleman had tried to prove that I do not exist, I daresay he could have proved it in the same fashion as he has proved this point, which I could not answer, but I know what I do know, and I do know that Christ is a precious Savior, and as I have read of Him in His Word, so have I found it in my own experience. The Word of the Lord and my experience tally, so I am satisfied."

If you come straight from searching the Scriptures, you need not mind who attacks you, the Scriptures will be like a coat of mail to repel all the darts of those who assail you, and you shall be able to stand up against those who are far more learned than you are. It is well if you can cope with all the arguments of the skeptic, and meet him and master him on his own ground, but the most of believing men and women are not able to do so. If you cannot argue thus, be content if you are like Cowper's poor woman who knows no more than that her Bible is true, for you may, like David, still be more than a match for the skeptic, and understand more than all your teachers, because you meditate upon God's statutes.

Last of all, David says that *he had more understanding than the ancients*, because he kept God's precepts. Oh, those ancients, they have a great deal to answer for! Some people seem to think that if anything is ancient, it must be right. If you look (I hope you will not care to do so) into some of our parish churches, you must say that no human being could see any difference between them and the Roman Catholic places.

If you do go in, ask the Ritualistic "priest" why he wears all that finery, why he burns stuff that has such a nasty smell, and what he means by all the mummeries and incantations that are such a mystery to you. He says, "This is what the ancient church did." If he could quote the really ancient church of the New Testament, you might agree with him, but he refers you to St. Honorius, St. Veronica, or some other ancients, either real or legendary. Does this "priest" succeed in getting people to believe in his ancient nonsense? Yes, he gets his converts among those silly women, and sillier men, who read novels, but never read their Bibles.

But they never do and never will, pervert a true Bible reader and Bible lover. If they ever do get hold of a nominal Baptist, they make a great boast of it because we are so accustomed to go to the Bible for everything we teach, and to test everything by the Bible, that I have known a Romanist say, "I can't make any headway with you. You don't believe in any traditions, not even in infant baptism! You will have a Bible proof for everything, or else you will not accept it." Yes, and if all professing Christians would but keep to that principle, Romanism and Ritualism would make far less headway than they do.

We say, with Isaiah, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Give us a Bible-reading, Bible-loving people, and all the "priests" in the world, with all their finery, will never make any headway. An open Bible is death to their follies and falsehoods, if there be but people with open eyes to read it. The worst of it is that, although we have the open Bible, we have not as many Bible readers and Bible lovers as we wish to see. May the Lord graciously increase the number the whole world over!

There is another kind of ancients that we have to guard against, and that is, very old sinners. There are old sinners who will say to you young men and young women who have lately been converted, "Ah! we have seen a good many people just as earnest as you are now, but you will soon grow as cold as they did."

Some of them will shake their heads and say, "We know you religious people, you are all a set of hypocrites." A wicked old sinner will tell you that when you are as old as he is, you won't be led astray in this way, yet he is himself going to hell as fast as ever he can! He says, "Don't you, young man,

imagine that you know everything. I have had more experience than you have had, and I know a thing or two that is worth knowing.”

I used to have an old man of that kind in my congregation at Waterbeach—a man pretty near seventy years of age, whose whole life had been one of wickedness and sin. He came to the place where I preached on purpose to pick up young men to lead them astray if he could. He was nothing better than a walking beer-barrel, and his mouth poured out little but filth. I had some sharp brushes with him, and I could not help feeling a holy indignation against him whenever I saw him.

There are some such old sinners still about, beware of them! Their hoary hairs are no crown of glory to them, but a crown of shame. A hoary head, where there is no grace, is worse than a fool’s cap, and there is no fool in the world like an old fool, and no other fool that can equal a grey-headed sinner who has for seventy years rejected Christ, and in spite of a thousand warnings and invitations, has deliberately made his own damnation sure. Take no notice of him, I pray you.

If it is an old woman who has lived in the ways of sin, and tries to allure you to evil, O young man, flee from her—young woman, escape from her at all costs! There are none whom Satan uses so much as he does these ancients, because they can balk so glibly, and look so sweetly at you and all the while they are deceiving you, and trying to ruin your immortal soul. If you cling to the Bible, they can do nothing with you.

When there is a great parade of age and authority, yet the advice given is backed up by experience that is vicious, turn at once to your Bibles, and say to the old man, or to the old woman, respectfully, yet firmly, “That is what you say, but this is what God says,” and then turn to your God and say with David, “I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.”

To sum up all, the heart must be right with God, and it can only be so as the result of simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and when the heart is right, and you are saved, I beseech you to let your Bibles be everything to you. Carry this matchless treasure with you continually, and read it, and read it, and read it again and again. Turn to its pages by day and by night. Let its narratives mingle with your dreams, let its precepts color your lives, let its promises cheer your darkness, let its divine illumination make glad your life.

As you love God, love this Book, which is the Book of God, and the God of books, as it has rightly been called, and may God make this Book to be your comfort when you pass through the valley of death-shade, and may you in heaven have forever to praise Him who revealed Himself to you through the pages of this blessed Book! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 119:113-128

Verse 113. *I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.*

Presumptuous thoughts, erroneous thoughts, wicked thoughts, foolish thoughts—all three David hated. A good man ought to be a good hater, as well as a good lover. What should he hate? He should hate vain thoughts. What should he love? He should love the law of the Lord. If we do not hate sin in the very egg, we shall not be likely to hate it in its fuller development.

The very thought of sin must be detestable to us, and if we do not think of evil, we shall not speak evil, nor do evil. We ought to begin with David at the beginning, and say, “I hate vain thoughts,” yet negative religion is not sufficient, so we should go on to the positive form, “‘Thy law do I love,’ and I love it so much that I wish I could always keep it, and never transgress it, and never forget it.”

114. *Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*

“Thou art my protection against every kind of danger.” David had been accustomed to hide in the caves of the mountains, but now he says that he hid himself in his God. When he did not hide, but stood out bravely against the ranks of his foes, then God was his shield to cover him in the day of battle.

115. *Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.*

If, by your evil example, you would take me off from serving my God, I will make you take yourselves off so that I may neither see nor follow your ill example, “Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.” David puts his foot down firmly and says, “I will keep the commandments of my God.” It is a grand thing to be able to speak of “my God.” Another man’s God would be of little use to me, but when He is my own God, my God in covenant relationship, then I may well say, “I will keep the commandments of my God.”

116. *Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live:*

“Lord, I cannot even live unless Thou uphold me according to Thy promises.” The Christian man is so dependent upon God that he owes his life and the continuance of it to upholding grace.

116. *And let me not be ashamed of my hope.*

“If Thy promises could fail me, then I should have cause to be ashamed of my hope. Therefore, O Lord, let me never at any time have the shadow of a doubt concerning the truthfulness of Thy promises, lest I should begin to be ashamed of my hope!”

117-118. *Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.*

“They are like salt that has lost its savour, which is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out, and tread it under their feet; and this is what thou doest with ungodly men, especially with those ‘that err from thy statutes.’ Thou treadest them beneath thy feet, ‘for their deceit is falsehood.’ They try to make it look like truth, but it is falsehood all the while.” How much of deceit there is in this world which men gloss and varnish so that the thing looks right enough though all the while it is deception and a sham! May God keep us from all the trickeries and falsehoods and errors of the age!

119. *Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross:*

“As the dross is thrown away when the useful metal has been extracted from it, so, O Lord, when Thou hast taken all Thy saints out of the world, Thou will put the wicked of the earth away like dross.”

119. *Therefore I love thy testimonies.*

What? Does David love God’s testimonies because they are thus severe? Yes, for it is the mark of a true believer that he does not kick against the severities of his God. Worldlings can rejoice in the god of this age, who is said to be nothing but effeminate benevolence, but the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob is the God of justice, who will by no means spare iniquity, and for that very reason a true believer says with David, “I love thy testimonies.”

120. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.*

This is the man who truly loves God, and this is the kind of fear that perfect love does not cast out. Though we love God supremely, we become for that very reason God-fearing men, and dread to do anything that would cause Him anger or sorrow.

121. *I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.*

When a man is conscious of doing right, he has a good ground of appeal to God. If, when it was in your power, you did not oppress others, you may plead with God that He will not let others oppress you. If it has been your habit to act with judgment and justice towards others, you may expect that God will defend you against all your oppressors.

122-123. *Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation,—*

“I have looked for it so long, I have longed for it so eagerly, that my eyes seem to grow inflamed with watching, a film seems to come over them so that I cannot see out of them, ‘Mine eyes fail for thy salvation.’”

123. *And for the word of thy righteousness.*

“I look for no salvation except in the way revealed in Thy Word, and I do not wish Thee to do an unrighteous thing even to save me from my oppressors.”

124. *Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy,—*

He dare not ask to be dealt with by God on any other ground than that of mercy. Though he is innocent of that which the ungodly laid to his charge, he is not innocent before God, and therefore he pleads for mercy. He owns that God is his Lord and Master, and that he is God's servant, and as a man should deal mercifully with his servant, he pleads that God will so deal with him, "Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy."

124. *And teach me thy statutes.*

He had kept God's statutes so far as the eyes of men could see, but before God, he takes a humbler position, and begs to be taught what he is to do, asks to be instructed, like a child, in the statutes of his God.

125. *I am thy servant;*

This is the third time in four verses that David mentions this relationship, he seems proud of being God's servant. Though he were but as a menial yet would he glory in it, "I am thy servant;"—

125. *Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.*

"Lord, do not merely teach me, but give me understanding." That is what our teachers cannot do. They may put the truth before us so plainly that we ought to understand it, but they cannot give us understanding.

126. *It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.*

And surely this is an age in which this prayer is very suitable. On all hands we see God's law ridiculed, or denied, or travestied, or else hidden under tradition or under the dicta of so-called scientific men, or in some way or other "made void." Oh, that God's right hand of grace might be stretched out to do some miracle of mercy in the land at this very time!

127. *Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.*

"Therefore"—because the wicked hated God's law, and made it void, David loved it all the more. It is a live fish that swims against the stream, it is a live man of God who can say, "They have made void thy law, *Therefore* I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold."

128. *Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right;*

"Ungodly men think they are wrong, that is an additional proof to me that they are right." When a certain old philosopher had been praised by a bad man, he asked, "What have I done amiss that he should speak well of me?" And there are some men's mouths out of which the praise of Christ or the praise of the Scriptures would be to God's dishonor. They tell me that So-and-so spoke blasphemously against Christ, but why should he not do so? It is natural for him to be a blasphemer.

When serpents hiss, do they not act according to their nature? I do not read that Christ stopped men's mouths when they blasphemed Him, but I do know that, when the demons bore witness to Him, He silenced them, for He liked not to be praised by diabolical mouths. Let ungodly men say what they may, we know the value of their speeches, and we are not troubled by them.

128. *And I hate every false way.*

Again David mentions his hatred of all falseness. Some men are such "chips in the porridge" that they neither love nor hate, but the believer is a man who has both loves and aversions. He loves the truth, and therefore he hates every false way.

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